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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4400
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 6155
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 2976
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3898
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 4063
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0426
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 2078
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1515
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 1042
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 5336
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0060
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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000354

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2019

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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH MISCHARACTERIZES JORDAN'S
HANDLING OF DEMONSTRATIONS DURING THE GAZA CRISIS

REF: 08 AMMAN 1533

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized Jordan and other Middle Eastern governments in a January 21 press release for not allowing their citizens the right to protest Israeli operations in Gaza. HRW's press release also highlighted events at a protest outside the Israeli Embassy to Jordan on January 9 stating that riot police beat demonstrators, including Al Jazeera Amman Bureau Chief, Yasir Abu Hilala. The release said that prosecutors have not taken the statements of other demonstrators beaten by police.

¶2. (SBU) While Jordan's Public Gatherings Law requires advance permission from the governor for protests, during the Gaza events the GOJ suspended that requirement. These actions paved the way for 624 protests and demonstrations, including 84 organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, according to press reports. While the law has subsequently come back into effect, Jordan very effectively allowed demonstrations during the Gaza crisis.

¶3. (SBU) The issue of police actions during the January 9 protest is more gray. A Locally Employed Staff (LES) member, who covered the January 9 demonstration, said that police mostly maintained a neutral stance while protesters pushed them, threw stones and shouted harsh language. Journalists mingled freely with protestors. In the midst of the protest, according to the LES, Commander of the Gendarmerie General Halalmeh arrived and quickly conferred with police officials on-scene. The police subsequently changed tactics, hitting protestors with their batons and using tear gas and water canons to disburse the protestors. PSD sources told RSO February 1 that they and the Gendarmerie are investigating the police handling of protestors without providing further details.

¶4. (C) Comment: Human Rights Watch, which covers events in Jordan from its New York office and through NGO contacts on the ground, inaccurately included Jordan in the blanket statement criticizing Arab regimes for not allowing protests of events in Gaza. On police handling of the January 9 protests, facts are less clear. Post will follow up for details of the PSD reports once the investigation is

concluded.

15. (U) The complete January 21 HRW statement can be found on-line at: <http://hrw.org/en/news/2009/01/21/gaza-crisis-regimes-react-routine-repression>.

Visit Amman's Classified Website at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman>
Beecroft